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United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Tips for Travelers to Mexico

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Table of Contents

How To Have a Safe and Healthy Trip

Before You Go 1
After You Arrive — Emergency Help 2
Safety Tips 3
Reporting a Crime 5
Avoiding Legal Problems 5
Staying Healthy 7

U.S. Assistance in Mexico

Where to Turn If You Have Serious Legal, Medical, or Financial Difficulties 9
Advice on Dual Nationality 10

A Guide to Entry and Exit Regulations

Getting Into Mexico 11
Travel Requirements for Children 12
Driving Your Car to Mexico 12
Rental Cars 13
Bringing Your Own Plane or Boat to Mexico 14
Operation of Citizen's Band (CB) Equipment 14
What You May Bring Into Mexico 15
Shopping—Some Things To Beware of Buying 16
Returning to the United States 17

Useful Addresses and Telephone/Telex Numbers

U.S. Embassy, Mexico City 18
Consulates General and Consulates 18
Consular Agents 20

Cover: Zapotec urn from Monte Albán.

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Tips for Travelers to Mexico

Between 6 and 7 million U.S. citizens visit Mexico each year, while more than 400,000 Americans reside there. Although the majority thoroughly enjoy their stay, some experience difficulties and serious inconvenience.

The Department of State and its Foreign Service posts in Mexico offer a wide range of services to assist U.S. citizens in distress. U.S. consular officials meet regularly with Mexican authorities to promote the safety of U.S. citizens in Mexico. To keep you among the happy majority who do not experience difficulties, here are some precautions you can take.

Note: Entry requirements for Mexico are on page 11.

How To Have a Safe and Healthy Trip

Before You Go

Give your family or friends in the United States a copy of your proposed itinerary—and keep them informed if your travel plans change. This will help them find you in an emergency. Carry a photo identification with you and include with it the name of a person to contact in the event of serious illness or other emergency.

Safety begins before you leave home. Do not bring anything you would hate to lose. Leave things like unnecessary credit cards and expensive jewelry at home. Bring travelers checks, not cash. Use a money belt or concealed pouch for passport, cash, and other valuables.

It is also wise to photocopy your airline or other tickets and your list of travelers checks. Leave a copy with someone at home, and carry an extra copy with you.

If you plan to drive, learn about your route from an auto club, guide book, or a Mexican government tourist office. Some routes have heavy truck and bus traffic, others have poor or nonexistent shoulders, and many have animals on the loose. Also, some of the newer roads have very few restaurants, motels, gas stations, or auto repair shops.

You may not be able to avoid all problems, but at least you will know what to expect if you have done some research.

> **Caution:** See page 4 for routes to avoid because of highway crime.
>
> **Also:** Be sure to read pages 12–14 for more information on driving your car in Mexico.

For your safety, have your vehicle serviced and in optimum condition before you leave for Mexico. It is wise to bring an extra fan belt, fuses, and other spare parts. (See page 13 for information on bringing spare parts through Mexican customs.) Pack a basic first-aid kit and carry an emergency water supply in your vehicle. Be aware that unleaded gasoline is generally not available, especially after you leave the main highways. Bring a flexible funnel to fill your gas tank because some gas stations have nozzles too large to fit unleaded gas tanks.

After You Arrive—Emergency Help

In an emergency, call [91] (5) 250–0123, the 24-hour hotline of the Mexican Ministry of Tourism.

> **Note on telephones:** If you are calling long distance within Mexico, use the prefix 91, plus the city code. When calling from the U.S., dial 52 in place of 91.

The hotline is for immediate assistance, but it can give you general, nonemergency guidance as well. It is an important number to keep with you. If necessary, in an emergency, you may also call the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S.consulate or consular agency. (See addresses at the end of this pamphlet.)

If you have an emergency while driving, call the Ministry of Tourism's hotline to obtain help from the "Green Angels," a fleet of radio-dispatched trucks with bilingual crews that operate daily. Services include protection, medical first aid, mechanical aid for your car, and basic supplies. You will not be charged for services, only for parts, gas and oil. The Green Angels patrol daily, from dawn until sunset. If you are unable to call them, pull well

off the road and lift the hood of your car; chances are good that they will find you.

Safety Tips

As a visitor to Mexico, be alert to your new surroundings. Hazards in Mexico may be different from those you are used to, and safety regulations and their enforcement are generally not equivalent to U.S. standards.

On Foot. Watch out for irregular pavement and open manholes.

In large cities, take the same precautions against assault, robbery, or pickpockets that you would take in any large U.S. city. Avoid dark alleys, crowds, and marginal areas. Be aware that women and small children, as well as men, can be pickpockets or purse snatchers. Keep your billfold in an inner front pocket; carry your purse tucked securely under your arm; and wear the shoulder strap of your camera or bag across your chest. To guard against thieves on motorcycles, walk away from the curb and carry your purse away from the street.

By Car. Avoid excessive speed and, if at all possible, do not drive at night. Loose livestock can appear at any time. Construction sites or stranded vehicles are often unmarked by flares or other warning signals. Sometimes cars have only one headlight; bicycles seldom have lights or reflectors. Be prepared for a sudden stop at any time. Mexican driving conditions are such that, for your safety, you must drive more slowly than you do at home.

Learn local driving signals. In Mexico, a blinking left turn signal on the vehicle in front of you could mean that it is clear ahead and you may pass, or it could mean the driver is making a left turn. An outstretched left arm may mean an invitation for you to pass. When in doubt, do not pass.

An oncoming vehicle flashing its headlights is a warning for you to slow down or pull over because you are both approaching a narrow bridge or place in the road. The custom is that the first vehicle to flash has the right of way and the other must yield.

When it begins to rain, immediately slow down to a crawl. Freshly wet roads are dangerous because oil and road dust mix with water and form a lubricant. Until this mixture

washes away, driving is extremely hazardous. Beware of sudden rains. Stop, or go extremely slowly, until conditions improve.

To avoid highway crime, try not to drive at night and never drive alone at night. Never sleep in vehicles along the road. If your vehicle breaks down, stay with it and wait for the police or the Green Angels. Do not, under any circumstances, pick up hitchhikers who not only pose a threat to your physical safety, but also put you in danger of being arrested for unwittingly transporting narcotics or narcotics traffickers in your vehicle. Your vehicle can be confiscated if you are transporting marijuana or other narcotics. There are checkpoints and temporary roadblocks where vehicles are checked.

Beware of Highway 15 in the state of Sinaloa and of Highway 40 between the city of Durango and the Pacific coast, areas that are particularly dangerous and where a number of criminal assaults have occurred. Avoid express Highway 1 (limited access) in Sinaloa altogether — even in daytime — because it is remote and subject to bandits.

On Public Transport. Be vigilant in bus and train stations and on public transport. Do not accept beverages from other passengers. In the past, tourists have occasionally been drugged and robbed while they slept.

On Streets and Highways. Be aware of persons representing themselves as Mexican police or other local officials. Some Americans have been the victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion by criminals masquerading as officials. Mexican authorities are concerned about these incidents and have cooperated in investigating such cases. You must, however, have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint. Make a note of this information if you are ever involved with police or other officials.

Do not be surprised if you encounter several types of police in Mexico. The Preventive Police, the Transit Police, and the Federal Highway Police all wear uniforms. The Judicial Police who work for the public prosecutor are not uniformed.

At the Pool or Beach. Do not leave your belongings on the beach while you are swimming. Keep your passport and other valuables in the hotel safe.

Carefully assess the risk potential of recreational activities. Sports equipment that you rent or buy may not meet the safety standards to which you are accustomed. For example, unless you are certain that scuba diving equipment is up to standard, do not use it. Inexperienced scuba divers should beware of dive shops that promise to "certify" you after a few hours instruction. Safe diving requires lengthy training.

If you are interested in the parachute rides offered at many Mexican beach resorts, be aware that, by putting your name on the passenger list, you are relieving the boat operator and owner of responsibility for your safety.

Do not use pools or beaches without lifeguards, or, if you do, exercise extreme caution. Do not dive into unknown bodies of water because hidden rocks or shallow depths can cause serious injury or death. Some Mexican beaches, such as those in Cancun, have warning signs about undertow; take them seriously. Be aware that the newer resorts may lack comprehensive medical facilities.

Reporting a Crime

If You Are in Danger. Call the Mexican Ministry of Tourism's emergency hotline, [91] (5) 250–0123, for immediate assistance. Or, in Mexico City, dial 06 for police assistance.

If You Have Been the Victim of a Crime. Immediately contact the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate or consular agency. For addresses and telephone numbers, see the end of this pamphlet. You should also report the crime to the local police immediately. If you have difficulty filing this report, the Mexican police have a complement to the Green Angels, called the Silver Angels. This group helps tourists who are victims of crime file a police report. Call the Silver Angels on [91] (5) 588–5100.

Avoiding Legal Problems

While traveling in Mexico, you are subject to Mexican laws and not U.S. laws. Tourists who commit illegal acts have no special privileges and are subject to full prosecution under the Mexican judicial system.

First and Foremost, Avoid Drug Offenses. Mexico rigorously prosecutes drug cases. Under Mexican law, pos-

session of and trafficking in illegal drugs are federal offenses. For drug trafficking, bail does not exist. Mexican law does not differentiate between types of narcotics: heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines, for example, are treated the same. Offenders found guilty of possessing more than a token amount of any narcotic substance are subject to a minimum sentence of 10 years, and it is not uncommon for persons charged with drug offenses to be detained for up to 1 year before a verdict is reached.

Remember, if narcotics are found in your vehicle, you are subject to arrest and your vehicle can be confiscated.

Avoid Public Drunkenness. It is against the law in Mexico. Certain border towns have become impatient with teenaged (and older) Americans who cross the border to drink and carouse. This behavior can lead to fights, arrests, traffic accidents, and even death.

Do not bring firearms or ammunition of any kind into Mexico unless you have first obtained a consular firearms certificate from a Mexican consulate. To hunt in Mexico, you must obtain a hunting permit, also available from the consulate. Travelers carrying guns or ammunition into Mexico without a Mexican certificate have been arrested, detained, and sentenced to stiff fines and lengthy prison terms. The sentence for clandestine importation of firearms is up to 6 years. If the weapon is greater than .38 caliber, it is considered of military type, and the sentence is from 5 to 30 years. When you enter Mexico, make certain that Mexican customs officials check both the firearms and your certificate. When you reach your destination, register your firearms with the appropriate military zone headquarters.

Be aware that, even when you enter Mexican waters on your private boat, you are subject to the ban on importing firearms.

> **Note:** Before you leave the United States, you must register your firearms and ammunition with U.S. Customs if you wish to bring them back with you.

In some areas of Mexico, it is not wise to carry anything that might be construed as a weapon. Some cities, such as Nuevo Laredo, have ordinances prohibiting the possession of knives and similar weapons. Tourists have even been arrested for possessing souvenir knives. Most

arrests for knife possession occur in connection with some other infraction, such as drunk and disorderly behavior.

Failure to pay hotel bills or for other services rendered is considered fraud under Mexican law. Those accused of these offenses are subject to arrest and conviction with stiff fines and jail sentences.

Be Cautious When Purchasing Real Estate. There are various restrictions on foreigners purchasing property in Mexico. Before you invest money, be certain that you are in compliance with Mexican law and that you are dealing with a reputable developer, time-share company, or real estate agent. For information and for names of Mexican lawyers, contact the American Society of Mexico or the American Chamber of Commerce. You may also obtain a list of Mexican lawyers from the U.S. Embassy or a U.S. consulate or from the Office of Citizens Consular Services, Inter-American Division, Room 4817, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520, (202) 647–3712. If your investment in Mexican property is illegal, you risk confiscation by the government of Mexico.

Be aware that most time-share condo companies are not registered in the U.S. and do not abide by U.S. rules. For instance, there is no day or two "remorse period" in which you can change your mind and back out of a contract that you have signed.

To Avoid Disputes With Merchants, Be a Careful Shopper. Make sure the goods you buy are in good condition and always get a receipt. There is a federal consumer protection office, the Procuraduria Federal del Consumidor, to assist you if you have a major problem with a faulty product or service. However, if the problem is with a service of the tourist industry, you should bring the matter to the Mexican Government Tourist Office (Secretaria de Turismo).

Staying Healthy

Review Your Health Insurance Policy. In some places, particularly at resorts, medical costs can be as high or higher than in the United States. If your insurance policy does not cover you in Mexico, it is strongly recommended that you purchase a policy that does. There are short-term health insurance policies designed specifically to cover travel.

Medical facilities in Mexico differ from those in the United States, and treatment for some types of illnesses or injuries may be only remedial. Some remote areas or coastal islands may have few or no medical facilities. For these reasons, in addition to medical insurance that you can use in Mexico, consider obtaining insurance or joining a medical assistance program to cover the exorbitant cost of medical evacuation in the event of an accident or serious illness. As part of the coverage, these programs usually offer emergency consultation by telephone. They may refer you to the nearest hospital or call for help on your behalf; they may translate your instructions to a health care worker on the scene. The cost of medical evacuation coverage can be as low as $50 for a trip of 30 days. Without this insurance, medical evacuation can cost thousands of dollars.

If your travel agent cannot direct you to a medical assistance company, look for information on them in travel magazines. The U.S. Government cannot pay to have you medically evacuated to the United States.

Immunizations are recommended against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, typhoid, and hepatitis A. For visitors coming directly from the United States, no vaccinations are required to enter Mexico. If you are traveling from an area known to be infected with yellow fever, a vaccination certificate is required.

Malaria is found in some rural areas of Mexico, particularly those near the southwest coast. Travelers to malarial areas should consult their physician or the U.S. Public Health Service and take the recommended dosage of chloroquine. Although chloroquine is not considered necessary for travelers to the major resort areas on the Pacific and Gulf coasts, travelers to those areas should use insect repellent and take other personal protection measures to reduce contact with mosquitoes, particularly from dusk to dawn when malaria transmission is most likely.

Drink Only Bottled Water or Water That Has Been Boiled for 20 Minutes. Avoid ice cubes. Vegetables and fruits should be peeled or washed in a purifying solution. A good rule of thumb is, if you can't peel it or cook it, don't eat it. Medication to prevent travelers' diarrhea is not recommended. If symptoms present themselves and persist, seek medical attention because diarrhea is potentially dangerous.

Air pollution in Mexico City is severe. It is the most dangerous during thermal inversions which occur most often from December to May. Air pollution plus Mexico City's high altitude are a particular health risk for the elderly and persons with high blood pressure, anemia, or respiratory or cardiac problems. If this applies to you, consult your doctor before traveling to Mexico City.

In high altitude areas, such as Mexico City, most people need a short adjustment period. Spend the first few days in a leisurely manner, with a light diet and reduced intake of alcohol. Avoid strenuous activity— this includes everything from sports to rushing up the stairs. Reaction signs to high altitude are lack of energy, a tendency to tire easily, shortness of breath, occasional dizziness, and insomnia.

U.S. Assistance in Mexico

Where To Turn If You Have Serious Legal, Medical, or Financial Difficulties

Legal Problems. If you find yourself in serious difficulty while in Mexico, contact a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate for assistance. U.S. consuls cannot serve as attorneys or give legal assistance. They can, however, provide lists of local attorneys and advise you of your rights under Mexican laws.

Worldwide, Mexico has the highest number of arrests of Americans abroad—over 2,000 per year—and the highest prison population of U.S. citizens outside of the United States—about 425 at any one time. If you are arrested, ask permission to notify the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. consulate. Under international agreements and practice, you have the right to talk with an American consul. Although U.S. consuls are limited in what they can do to assist you in legal difficulties, they can monitor the status of detained U.S. citizens and make sure they are treated fairly under local laws. They will also notify your relatives or friends upon your request.

An individual is guaranteed certain rights under the Mexican constitution, but those rights differ significantly from U.S. constitutional guarantees. The Mexican judicial system is based on Roman and Napoleonic law and

presumes a person accused of a crime to be guilty until proven innocent. There is no trial by jury nor writ of habeas corpus in the Anglo-American sense. Trial under the Mexican system is a prolonged process based largely on documents examined on a fixed date in court by prosecution and defense counsel. Sentencing usually takes 6 to 10 months. Bail can be granted after sentencing if the sentence is less than 5 years. Pre-trial bail exists but is never granted when the possible sentence upon conviction is greater than 5 years.

Medical or Financial Problems. If you become seriously ill, U.S. consular officers can assist in finding a doctor and in notifying your family and friends about your condition. Consular officers can also help arrange the transfer of emergency funds to you if you become destitute as a result of robbery, accident, or other emergency.

Advice on Dual Nationality

U.S. law recognizes that Americans may also be citizens of other countries.

Under Mexican law, an individual born in Mexico of an American parent or parents may acquire both nationalities at birth. Also, a U.S. citizen born in the United States of a Mexican father—or after December 26, 1969, of a Mexican mother—may have dual nationality.

If you are a U.S.-Mexican dual national, you must have evidence of your U.S. citizenship with you when you travel between the United States and Mexico. Such evidence can be a U.S. passport, naturalization certificate, consular report of birth abroad, certificate of citizenship, or a certified copy of your U.S. birth certificate.

If you are a dual national, be aware that you could lose your U.S. nationality if you obtain a Certificate of Mexican Nationality. The Mexican Government recognizes a child's dual nationality from birth to age 18 without requiring an oath of allegiance. Starting at age 18, in order to obtain a Mexican passport or to obtain other benefits, such as the right to own property in a restricted zone, to pay a favorable resident tuition rate at a Mexican university, or to vote in a Mexican election, a dual national is required by Mexican law to obtain a Certificate of Mexican Nationality (CMN). To obtain a CMN, a person must complete an application in which he or she subscribes to

an oath of allegiance to Mexico and renounces any other nationality that he or she might possess. Under U.S. law, subscribing to this oath and obtaining a CMN normally results in the loss of U.S. nationality. If you contemplate obtaining a CMN, it is strongly recommended that you first consult the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate.

A Guide to Entry and Exit Regulations

Getting Into Mexico

U.S. citizens visiting Mexico for no more than 72 hours and remaining within 20 kilometers of the border do not need a permit to enter. Those transiting Mexico to another country need a transit visa which costs a nominal fee and is valid for up to 30 days.

Tourist Cards. All U.S. citizens visiting Mexico for tourism or study for up to 180 days need a document, called a tourist card in English or FMT in Spanish, to enter and leave Mexico. The tourist card is free and may be obtained from Mexican consulates, Mexican tourism offices, Mexican border crossing points, and from most airlines serving Mexico. If you fly to Mexico, you must obtain your tourist card before boarding your flight; it cannot be obtained upon arrival at an airport in Mexico.

The tourist card is issued upon presentation of proof of citizenship, such as a U.S. passport or a U.S. birth certificate, plus a photo I.D., such as a driver's license. Tourist cards are issued for up to 90 days with a single entry, or if you present proof of sufficient funds, for 180 days with multiple entries.

Upon entering Mexico, retain and safeguard the pink copy of your tourist card so you may surrender it to Mexican immigration when you depart. You must leave Mexico before your tourist card expires or you are subject to a fine. A tourist card for less than 180 days may be revalidated in Mexico by the Mexican immigration service (Direccion General de Servicios Migratorios).

Visas. If you wish to stay longer than 180 days, or if you wish to do business or conduct religious work in Mexico, contact the Mexican Embassy or the nearest Mexican

consulate to obtain a visa or permit. Persons conducting religious work on a tourist card are subject to arrest and deportation.

Residing or Retiring in Mexico. If you plan to live or retire in Mexico, consult a Mexican consulate on the type of long-term visa you will need. As soon as possible after you arrive in the place you will live, it is a good idea to register with the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate or consular agent. Bring your passport or other identification with you. Registration makes it easier to contact you in an emergency. (Registration information is confidential and will not be released to inquirers without your express authorization.)

Travel Requirements for Children

A child under age 18 traveling with only one parent must have written, notarized consent from the other parent to travel, or must carry, if applicable, a decree of sole custody for the accompanying parent or a death certificate for the other parent. A child traveling alone or in someone else's custody must have notarized consent from both parents to travel, or if applicable, notarized consent from a single parent plus documentation that the parent is the only custodial parent.

Driving Your Car to Mexico

Permits. When you drive to Mexico, you must obtain a temporary vehicle import permit. You must show: your proof of ownership or notarized authorization from the owner to bring the car into Mexico, a valid driver's license, proof of auto liability insurance, and current registration and plates. The permit is issued free at border entry points and should be valid for the same period of time as your tourist card (up to 180 days). Verify that your permit is valid for as long a period as your tourist card. You must remove your motor vehicle from Mexico before the permit expires or have the permit extended by the Temporary Importation Department of a Mexican customs office. If you do not do so, your motor vehicle may be confiscated.

You may not sell, transfer, or otherwise dispose of a motor vehicle brought into Mexico on a temporary importation permit, nor may you leave Mexico without the

vehicle. In case of emergency, or following an accident where the vehicle cannot be removed, the owner may request permission to depart Mexico without the vehicle through the Mexican Customs Office in Mexico City, or the local office of the Treasury Department (Hacienda) in other cities.

If you bring spare auto parts to Mexico, declare them when you enter the country. When you leave, be prepared to show that you are taking the unused parts with you or that you have had them installed in Mexico. Save your repair receipts for this purpose.

If you wish to authorize another person to drive your car, record the authorization with Mexican officials when you enter Mexico—even if you expect to be a passenger when the other person drives. Do not, under any circumstances, allow an unauthorized person to drive your vehicle when you are not in the car. Such a person could have to pay a fine amounting to a substantial percentage of the vehicles's value, or your vehicle could be confiscated.

Insurance. Mexican auto insurance is sold in most cities and towns on both sides of the border. U.S. automobile liability insurance is not valid in Mexico nor is most collision and comprehensive coverage issued by U.S. companies. Therefore, when you cross the border, purchase auto insurance adequate for your needs in Mexico. A good rule of thumb is to buy coverage equivalent to that which you carry in the United States.

Motor vehicle insurance is invalid in Mexico if the driver is found to to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Regardless of whether you have insurance, if you are involved in an accident, you will be taken into police custody until it can be determined who is liable and whether you have the ability to pay any judgment. If you do not have Mexican liability insurance, you are almost certain to spend some time in jail until all parties are satisfied that responsibility has been assigned and adequate financial satisfaction received. There may also be criminal liability assigned if the injuries or damages are serious.

Rental Cars

Renting in the United States. Many car rental companies in the United States have clauses in their contracts prohibiting drivers from traveling out of the country. The

Mexican police are aware of these regulations, and will sometimes impound rental vehicles driven from the United States. When renting a vehicle in the United States, check with the company to see if your contract allows you to drive it into Mexico.

Renting a Car in Mexico. The standard insurance included with many car rental contracts in Mexico provides only nominal liability coverage, often as little as the equivalent of $200. Because Mexican law permits the jailing of drivers after an accident until they have met their obligations to third parties and to the rental company, renters should read their contracts carefully and purchase additional liability and comprehensive insurance if necessary.

Bringing Your Own Plane or Boat to Mexico

Private aircraft and boats are subject to the same Mexican customs regulations as are motor vehicles. When you arrive at a Mexican port in your private boat, you can obtain a temporary import permit for it similar to the one given for motor vehicles.

Flying your own plane to Mexico, however, is more complicated. Well before your trip, inquire about private aircraft regulations and procedures from a Mexican consulate or Mexican Government Tourist Office.

Operation of Citizen's Band (CB) Equipment

American tourists are permitted to operate CB radios in Mexico. You must, however, obtain a 180 day permit for a nominal fee by presenting your U.S. citizen's band radio authorization at a Mexican consulate or Mexican Government Tourist Office. This permit cannot be obtained at the border.

Transmissions on CB equipment are allowed only on channels 9, 10, and 11, and only for personal communication and emergency road assistance. Any device which increases transmission power to over 5 watts is prohibited. CB equipment may not be used near radio installations of the aeronautical and marine services.

What You May Bring Into Mexico

Customs Regulations. Tourists should enter Mexico with only the items needed for their trip. Entering with large quantities of an item a tourist might not normally be expected to have, particularly expensive appliances, such as televisions, stereos, or other items, may lead to suspicion of smuggling and possible confiscation of the items and arrest of the individual.

Unless you prepare ahead, you may have difficulty bringing computers or other expensive electronic equipment into Mexico for your personal use. To prevent being charged an import tax, write a statement about your intention to use the equipment for personal use and to remove it from Mexico when you leave. Have this statement signed and certified at a Mexican consulate in the United States and present it to Mexican customs as you enter Mexico.

Land travelers should verify from Mexican customs at the border that all items in their possession may be legally brought into Mexico. You will be subject to a second immigration and customs inspection south of the Mexican border where unlawful items may be seized, and you could be prosecuted regardless of whether or not the items passed through the initial customs inspection.

Firearms. Do not bring firearms or ammunition into Mexico without first obtaining a permit from a Mexican consulate in the United States. See page 6 for more on importing firearms.

Currency. In 1982, the Mexican government lifted currency controls and modified its exchange rate system, permitting tourists to exchange dollars for pesos at the fluctuating free market rate. There are no restrictions on the import or export of bank notes and none on the export of reasonable quantities of ordinary Mexican coins. However, gold or silver Mexican coins may not be exported.

Take travelers checks with you because personal U.S. checks are rarely accepted by Mexican hotels or banks. Major credit cards are accepted in many hotels, shops, and restaurants. An exchange office (casa de cambios) usually gives a better rate of exchange than do stores, hotels, or restaurants.

Pets. U.S. visitors to Mexico may bring a dog, cat, or up to four canaries by presenting the following certificates at the border:

(1) a pet health certificate signed by a registered veterinarian in the United States and issued not more than 72 hours before the animal enters Mexico; and

(2) a pet vaccination certificate showing that the animal has been treated for rabies, hepatitis, pip, and leptospirosis.

Certification by Mexican consular authorities is not required for the health or vaccination certificate. A permit fee is charged at the time of entry into Mexico.

Shopping—Some Things To Beware of Buying

Wildlife and Wildlife Products. Beware of purchasing souvenirs made from endangered wildlife. Mexican markets and stores abound with wildlife, most of it prohibited from international traffic. You risk confiscation and a possible fine by U.S. Customs if you attempt to import virtually any wildlife from Mexico. In particular, watch out for and avoid:

— All products made from sea turtles, including such items as turtle leather boots, tortoise-shell jewelry, and sea turtle oil cosmetics.

— Fur from spotted cats.

— Mexican birds, stuffed or alive, such as parrots, parakeets, or birds of prey.

— Crocodile and caiman leather.

— Black coral jewelry.

— Wildlife curios, such as stuffed iguanas.

When driving across state lines within Mexico, you can expect to be stopped at agricultural livestock inspection stations.

Antiques. Mexico considers all pre-Columbian objects to be the "inalienable property of the Nation" and that the unauthorized export of such objects is theft and is punishable by arrest, detention, and judicial prosecution. Under U.S. law, to import pre-Columbian monumental and

architectural sculpture and murals, you must present proof that they were legally exported from the country of origin. U.S. law does not prohibit the import of non-monumental or nonarchitectural artifacts from Mexico.

Glazed Ceramics. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, it is possible to suffer lead poisoning if you consume food or beverages that have been stored or served in improperly glazed ceramic ware. Analysis of many ceramic pieces from Mexico has shown them to contain dangerous levels of lead. Unless you have proof of their safety, use glazed ceramics purchased in Mexico for decorative purposes only.

Returning to the United States

You must present the pink copy of your tourist card at your point of departure from Mexico. If you are returning by motor vehicle, you will need to show your vehicle import permit when you cross the border. At the time of publication, the airport departure tax is $10 or the equivalent in Mexican currency for those returning by commercial airline.

The U.S. Customs Service currently permits U.S. citizens returning from international travel to bring back $400 worth of merchandise, including 1 liter of alcohol, duty free. The next $1,000 worth of items brought back is subject to a duty of 10%.

In addition to U.S. customs regulations, be aware that some U.S. border states (most notably, Texas) have imposed state restrictions on liquor, wine, and beer imports from Mexico. If you are planning to bring back alcoholic beverages, inquire about these restrictions from the liquor control office of the state through which you plan to return.

Useful Addresses and Telephone/ Telex Numbers

Note: For calls from the United States, dial the country code for Mexico, 52. For long distance within Mexico, dial 91 instead of 52. Telephones listed below without the [52] prefix are U.S. long distance numbers, not international numbers.

American Embassy
Paseo de la Reforma 305
Mexico 06500, D.F.
Tel [52] (5) 211-0042
Telex 017-73-091 and 017-75-685

U.S. Export Development Office/U.S. Trade Center
31 Liverpool
Mexico 06600, D.F.
Tel [52] (5) 591-0155
Telex 017-73-471

Consulates General and Consulates

American Consulate General
Avenue Lopez Mateos 924-N
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua
Tel: [52] (16) 134-048
After hours (emergencies): (915) 525-6066
Telex 033-840

American Consulate General
Progreso 175
Guadalajara, Jalisco
Tel [52] (36) 25-2998, or 25-2700
Telex 068-2-860 ACDMC

American Consulate
Calle Monterrey 141, Poniente
Hermosillo, Sonora
Tel [52] (621) 723-75
After hours (emergencies): [52] (621) 725-85
Telex 058-829 ACHEME

American Consulate
Ave. Primera No. 2002
Matamoros, Tamaulipas
Tel [52] (891) 2-52-50, or 2-52-51
After hours (emergencies): (512) 546-1611
Telex 035-827 ACMTME

American Consulate
Circunvalacion No. 120 Centro
Mazatlan, Sinaloa
Tel [52] (678) 5-2205
Telex 066-883 ACMZME

American Consulate
Paseo Montejo 453,
Merida, Yucatan
Tel [52] (99) 25-5011
After hours (emergencies): [52] (99) 25-5409
Telex 0753885 ACMEME

American Consulate General
Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon
Tel [52] (83) 45-2120
Telex 0382853 ACMYME

American Consulate
Avenida Allende 3330, Col. Jardin
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas
Tel [52] (871) 4-0696, 4-9616, or 4-0512
After hours (emergencies): (512) 727-9661
Telex 036-849 ACMLME

American Consulate General
Tapachula 96
Tijuana, Baja California
Tel [52] (66) 81-7400 or (706) 681-7400
After hours (emergencies): (619) 585-2000
Telex 056-6836 ACTJMEX

Consular Agents

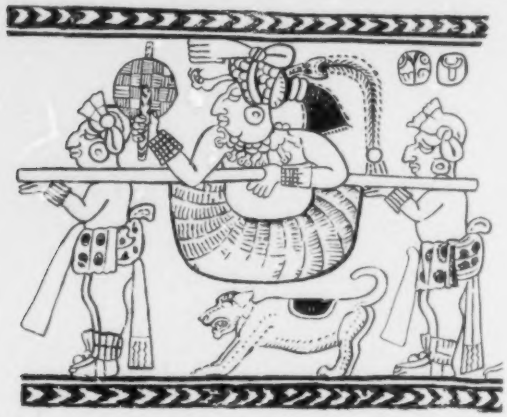
Resident consular agents have been designated in 10 other locations in Mexico to assist U.S. citizens in serious emergencies. Each consular agent is supervised by one of the above-listed offices and may be contacted through it or by calling the consular agent's direct number. The following list gives each consular agent's city and state, direct phone number, and the name of its supervisory office.

Acapulco, Guerrero; [52] (748) 5-7207 ext. 273;
U.S. Embassy, Mexico City
Cancun, Quintana Roo; [52] (988) 4-63-99;
U.S. Consulate, Merida
Durango, Durango; [52] (181) 1-2217;
U.S. Consulate General, Monterrey
Mulege, Baja California Sur; [52] (68) 5-3-0111;
U.S. Consulate General, Tijuana
Oaxaca, Oaxaca; [52] (951) 6-0654;
U.S. Embassy, Mexico City
Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco; [52] (322) 2-0069;
U.S. Consulate General Guadalajara
San Luis Potosi, San Luis Potosi;
[52] (481) 7-2501;
U.S. Consulate General, Monterrey
San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato;
[52] (465) 2-2357;
U.S. Consulate General, Guadalajara
Tampico, Tamaulipas; [52] (121) 3-2217
U.S. Embassy, Mexico City
Vera Cruz, Vera Cruz;
U.S. Embassy, Mexico City

Planning Another Trip?

For general travel information, the following pamphlets may be ordered for $1 each from the Superintendent of Documents. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; tel: (202) 783–3238:

— *Your Trip Abroad*
— *A Safe Trip Abroad*
— *Travel Tips for Older Americans*
— *Tips for Americans Residing Abroad*



Copies of the following publications are also available for $1 each from the U.S. Government Printing Office:

- *Tips for Travelers to Sub-Saharan Africa*
- *Tips for Travelers to the Caribbean*
- *Tips for Travelers to Central and South America*
- *Tips for Travelers to the People's Republic of China*
- *Tips for Travelers to Cuba*
- *Tips for Travelers to Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia*
- *Tips for Travelers to the Middle East and North Africa*
- *Tips for Travelers to South Asia*
- *Tips for Travelers to the USSR*

General visa information for these and other countries is available in *Foreign Entry Requirements*. This publication can be ordered for 50¢ from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado 81009.